

Choosing a Research Interest

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Choosing a Research Interest

Assignment

1. Write a one-page description of a research interest that you and your partner share. Briefly describe the topic and explain why you think this research interest is relevant to you and our class, i.e., **in what ways does the topic relate to life in America, the American dream, and/or have intergenerational relevance?** What is debated or argued about this topic?
2. After the paragraph, list a few research questions relevant to your interest using the advice below.

The best research evolves from authentic curiosity; curiosity starts with noticing, which leads to more careful observation and critical questioning. Campus and local issues can be a fruitful place to start focusing your curiosities because they may have more personal relevance to you than national or international issues. Additionally, a local focus, even with topics of broad relevance such as climate change, can be helpful for discovering novel ideas and engaging more directly with the implications. As you look at examples on the following page, consider how they might connect with our campus, city, and state. Think about issues that matter to you. What catches your eye when you read about current events, generational divides, or the American Dream?

Good starting points for investigating interests:

- Why do we _____?
- What causes _____?
- What are the consequences of _____?
- How should we fix, change, view, address, define _____?
- When should we _____?
- Who/what is responsible for _____?

Seek research interests that are:

- Open to productive academic and civic debate
- Original/ allow for the presentation of new and novel perspectives about an issue
- Challenging to your assumptions

Consider the following questions:

- What social issues hold a *personal* connection for you? What news stories grab your attention?

- What subjects cause you intense puzzlement, skepticism, or curiosity?
- What classes do you enjoy most?
- What sorts of careers interest you?
- What do you like to read/watch movies about?
- What personal experiences have inspired/required you to learn something new?
- What would you like to change about the United States, your community, or yourself?

Research question examples (these are just for inspiration; seek out what you're hungry to learn more about):

- Economic mobility has long been a central tenet of the American dream, but economists predict that the upcoming generations can expect a lower standard of living. Why? What does this mean for the American Dream?
- How is the climate crisis affecting the United States/Colorado/Boulder? How might this impact different generations? What should we do to anticipate/mitigate these impacts?
- Untreated mental illness is widespread in the United States. Why? What are the effects of ignoring this problem and what can/should be done?
- What might humane immigration reform look like in the US?
- How does the US define terrorism and how does this affect our interventions and safety? How does race/nationality influence the definition?
- Monuments depicting images and individuals associated with racism have become a cultural flashpoint. How should we think about the future of US monuments?
- Free speech on college campuses is a topic of fierce debate. What has changed/not changed in the last xx years? What should be done?
- The United States subsidizes crops like corn and soy, along with products like milk. What is the effect of these subsidies? Should the US reconsider these policies? Why? Why not?
- Some in the US are challenging the current system of shareholder-driven capitalism and proposing more socially conscious approaches to capitalism. Why is this happening? What are the benefits/risks of altering the current system?
- Why do people assume that social media is helpful to democracy and public debate? In what ways is it helpful and/or problematic to civil discourse?

- Why are so many US Veterans struggling to re-integrate successfully into society after their service? What can be done?
- What does _____ in (television, music, art, sports, etc.) tell us about our social values, ideals, shortcomings, and interests that we don't necessarily realize at first glance?
- What would be the implications of changing _____ law or policy? Would the benefits outweigh the negatives? How? Why?

Points 50

Submitting a file upload

Due	For	Available from	Until
Oct 16	Everyone	-	-

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